

Written Comments

- I am sorry that I was unable to attend the City's public forum! Here is my input.
 1. Mandatory review and compliance for NEW constructions projects downtown!
 2. Keep CHAIN STORES out the central business district.
 3. Ridgetop laws in and around Asheville.
- I participated in the forum Thursday evening. While I very much appreciate the attempt to listen to the citizens, the consensus process is apt to water down ideas to barely recognizable forms. For that reason, I want to submit to you my major concerns for the City of Asheville.

(1) Basic services such as police protection should be a top priority. We must have an adequate number of police officers to control crime. Police officers must be paid well enough to attract and retain high quality candidates for the job. Until Asheville is adequately protected, all other concerns become secondary.

(2) After safety is addressed, my next concern is Asheville's less than friendly attitude toward business. If our economy is to grow and thrive, we must encourage businesses of all types. Relying only on tourism is not wise. We must make Asheville an environment in which all businesses are welcome. My own experiences as a business owner in Asheville have made it clear to me that Asheville does not encourage business. If my life and business were not already deeply rooted here, I would have considered leaving Asheville when we decided to build a new building for my veterinary clinic. I was stunned to learn how unhelpful the city is to a business who is ready to create jobs and add to the tax base. During the building process, we were forced to jump through ridiculous hoops which wasted time and money. Rules were enforced inconsistently. Heavy handed control was thrust upon us at every turn. Why would someone choose to come to Asheville and put up with that? Reasonable building codes coupled with fair and consistent enforcement are essential if we want businesses to come here.

(3) Our government is not intended to be all things to all people. It becomes Socialism when you attempt to fix all of the ills of society through government intervention. Government should take care of only those things which cannot reasonably be done otherwise, such as police protection. All else should be left to the private sector. I am at the breaking point. Government is bleeding me dry at all levels. Money is extracted from me and then redistributed very inefficiently and irresponsibly through government. Much of my hard earned money is sucked up by lazy and/or dishonest people before it ever reaches anyone who truly is in need. Open your eyes to the fallacy of Socialism. Let the people keep what they earn and let Capitalism work.

Thank you for considering my concerns as you plan Asheville's future. You may also want to consider that many citizens would feel uncomfortable expressing

themselves in a forum setting. Others may have work or other constraints which kept them from coming to the forum. I would suggest publicizing other avenues for citizens to express their concerns to you, so that you get a broader range of input.

- Asheville is in the midst of explosive growth. Focus on and preservation of the city's historic flavor and character as development takes place are critical. This is important for the downtown, as well as for the city's major commercial corridors--Merrimon, Hendersonville Road, etc.

From the Village standpoint, we're concerned that attention continues on the flood issue. What's happening so far is a giant step in the right direction, and we need to continue to develop actions that will mitigate the damage from future floods and the area wide negative economic impact.

- Since I was unable to attend the meeting being held this evening I would like some thought be put into or research for the flood gauges and the repair of the energy loop. The councilman that stated in the paper this past week about doubts maybe she should go to the ones that lost so much. I did not, but would hope that "Leader's" for our community would strive to protect us by making wise decisions and seek advice from those who have experience with flood control.

The energy loop repair is one area that needs serious thought. Why would they waste so much of our tax money to do the things they are thinking about with this when there are hungry children, and elderly people that this money would help a lot more than a piece of metal!

- First of all, our gratitude to members of the City Council for your willingness to take a leadership role in Asheville. We appreciate the time and energy that you put into serving our community and want you to know that you have our support in making our city a better place for all of its citizens to live.

As part of the community goal-setting forum we offer the following issues that are important to us:

We want a city government that serves the needs of all of its citizens—from the penniless to the financially wealthy and all of those in between. In many ways, Asheville is a diverse community, and now that our City Council more closely reflects this diversity, we hope for actions from you that take all our wants and needs into account.

We want to be inspired by you, our leaders. We want you to consider us as your partners, to bring us into the process of making the decisions that will affect us all. We want servant leaders who are willing to set egos aside, listen to one another, listen to us, to understand that we're all in this together. There is more that connects us than divides us, and we encourage you to consider this perspective in your dealings with one another, with the citizens of Asheville and with all others.

We want decisions made at the city level that will help create a sustainable, just, compassionate healthy, forward-looking community.

We want Asheville to be a place that is welcoming to everyone, including our visitors. However, many of us live here because of our city's unique character. If folks want a more homogenized experience, there are plenty of other places to go. Asheville is diverse. Asheville is funky. Asheville is unusual. And that's just the way we like it.

We want our city to become more pedestrian and bike friendly, especially the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods. Rather than building parking garages downtown, we support more greenways and bike lanes throughout Asheville.

We want building in our downtown to be limited to structures similar in size and style to the existing structures in that area. In fact, we support a movement toward the renovation and occupancy of existing empty buildings prior to the approval of new building projects in downtown Asheville.

We want you to know that you can count on us to be involved on an ongoing basis, supporting you to be successful, letting you know when we think you're on the right track (and when you're off), attending city council meetings, sitting on city boards and commissions and holding you in our thoughts and prayers as you go about conducting the business of our unique mountain city.

I would like to see Asheville High look like it is a school that makes the top 100 list. Pans are put in the hallways to catch water when it rains, the upstairs auditorium has peeling paint all on the walls. An important film for city and school officials to see is "Kilowatt Ours"; school districts in Tenn. have switched to geothermal heating and save thousands each year in energy costs.

Also, I would like to see Asheville lead the way in green planning. In San Francisco, a bond was passed to retrofit all public buildings and the energy savings will pay for the bond. Make city cars and buses to be hybrids and/or boideisel. A great resource for planning is A PATTERN LANGUAGE by Christopher Alexander . Linda Panullo

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As a voter who lives in Haw Creek, I would like to suggest that Asheville obtain more sidewalks. It is hard for me to suggest to my overweight and obese children and adults to walk more if they don't have a place to walk.

Blake Fagan, 118 Weaver Blvd, Asheville NC 28804, 828-258-0670

As a citizen of Asheville and a devout mountain biker, I would like to express my grave disappointment and strong opposition to the city's plans for development at Richmond Hill. Again, I would like to remind several of the city council members of their commitment to "smart growth" and the preservation of green spaces. Given this, why are you willing to support the destruction of the largest green space the city owns?

I would like to see the City place a higher priority on sidewalks, greenways, and energy conserving systems (e.g., mass transit). I would like to be able to walk, run, or bike all across town without feeling threatened by automobiles. Larry Fincher

I am so pleased that the city council is having this goal setting meeting. I'm not sure if this is a usual thing for city council. I've not heard of it before but I am not terribly involved either. Anyway, it sounds like a very proactive approach and I'm proud to think of our city council as progressive. I am sure that this meeting will be packed. I was wondering if this meeting will be video taped and maybe available for viewing in other venues? Possibly on that channel that shows the city council meetings? Where might I get info regarding this?

Since Asheville is growing and changing so rapidly, I would like to see the council or whoever, maybe a new committee, who is getting informed about town planning and good growth. The growth could be a great opportunity for our city. Mimi Strang

I don't think I can make this meeting. I think a goal should be to establish greening of Asheville strategies. We have a lot going already with alternative fuel vehicles, over 800 acres of parks, lots of local food outlets, improved Asheville transit including bikes racks, clean water and some good greenways. I think energy use/ conservation and green power generation should be looked at as a way to both cut our polluting and our energy costs and dependency. Renewable energy and conservation produces good jobs as well as clean energy. Boone Guyton

Slow down the growth of building in Asheville, the roads are too crowded and the water system and sewage system are on overload. If Asheville keeps building and building without improving the current infrastructure we are going to be in deep trouble.

Also, building on top of ridges in Asheville city should not be allowed. The city council needs to immediately put a moratorium on that. People live, visit and move here for our beautiful landscape not for buildings!

Slow down taxes in the city, we pay city taxes (ready to skyrocket), we pay county taxes and we pay a city school tax. They are getting out of hand. My husband and I already pay \$2400 per year for our house currently valued at \$235,000. We originally paid \$25,000 for our house on two acres in 1985 and then added a \$60,000 addition in 1994. Bringing our home's value to about \$100,000. I shudder to think what the taxes are going to go up to since the price of homes in Asheville have skyrocketed. It's great for sellers but we would like to live here for a long time but may not be able to afford the taxes when we retire! I believe Asheville residents are tired of paying for parking garages and new roads such as College st. (which will be a disaster when the parking garage behind the health dept. is completed---900 cars converging onto the now-one way street all at 5pm!!) and the new round-a-bout with higher and higher taxes! enough is enough!

The utilities are also going up and up! The middle income people (like us) and the lower income folks of the city of Asheville are hardest hit and suffer the most from the high utilities and taxes. Salaries are not going up to meet these needs. Blessings, Cheryl Orengo

For City Council Public Meeting, I would like to suggest the issue of highly visible public restrooms in the Downtown, something I think has been a notable omission for some years. Yes, there are issues of cost, maintenance, and patrol, and if you want to find a reason not to have such a facility you can. But, a number of cities in New England have such human friendly resources. And you don't need to go any further than Black Mountain (Cherry Street), to find a facility that Asheville would do well to emulate. Cities with a heart and human scale attractiveness have easily accessible public restrooms.~ Cheers, James Sheeler

1. Pass a Living Wage Ordinance
 2. Restore Minimum Housing Code Enforcement
 3. Get Serious about Getting Green.
 4. Equal Domestic Partner Benefits to all City Employees
 5. Promote Affordable Housing by Implementing Inclusionary Zoning.
 6. Protect Constitutional and Civil Rights
 7. Support Local Businesses: Limit Big Box Development with Size Caps and Economic Impact Reviews.
 8. Tax Tourists with a Fair-Share Hotel Occupancy Tax
 9. Take a Stand for Public Health and Safety: Make Asheville a Nuclear-Free Zone.
 10. Change the Rules regarding filling vacant council seats.
- Beth Trigg

Hopefully the Council members will look after those of us who are Asheville natives and pay taxes to the city, county, and school; which seem to me to be very unfair for those of us who live in the city and are retired and on a fixed income. Most of us have a very small savings and it seems unfair that we have to spend them on these higher property taxes. I don't mind paying my city taxes but the county does nothing for me, nor do the schools. There are those of us who were born here and need not to be taxed out of our homes

Also I resent my tax money going for all these supposedly art pieces up town when our streets, sidewalks, etc., are in dire need of repair.

It is a shame that the water dispute cannot be resolved without spending our tax money to sue the county.

Also the city of Asheville should get a portion of the room tax that the tourist pay as they come here and use our facilities and all the room tax goes to promote more tourism

Also the Civic Center should be run by an independent firm, not the city of Asheville as it has been a loser for the city

Thank you. Mary Winner 16 Castle Street

I would like to ask you to add to the agenda a genuine concern for the traffic flow in West Asheville; particularly that on Michigan Avenue. There have been MANY accidents involving both vehicle and pedestrian at the intersection of Montana & Michigan avenues. There is only a two way stop at this intersection and no speed bumps to regulate speed. Even the city bus zooms past our house at a speed much too fast for residential traffic. My neighborhood is also very concerned about the traffic patterns on Haywood Road and the lack of pedestrian/ bicycle acknowledgment. I, personally, have been involved in a bicycle versus truck accident on Haywood just near the exchange. There has been one "cross- walk" painted onto the eastern side of Haywood with no accompanying light or signage. The overall traffic on the west end of town is frightening for cyclists, pedestrian and drivers. I feel if we increase the signage & in some way increased pedestrian/bicycle awareness, things would flow much more smoothly. Emilee Rose

Hello. I would like to let you know I think making all public places in the city of Asheville smoke-free is a very important issue. I know some bars and restaurants feel that this would cost them money. However, I know there are many people, like myself, who do not visit these bars because it's so smokey and unhealthy. And, almost 40,000 non-smokers die in America each year from exposure to this kind of smoke. I would also be open to considering support for a measure that ensures these kind of places install adequate ventilation to effectively remove the smoke. Thank you. Karen Cuthbertson Asheville City Resident for 12 years

I know this is not new information to any of you, but is this what we want for Asheville and Buncombe County? Much of it is already happening -sprawl - and it seems to be spiraling out of control. How can we work together to halt ... or at least attempt to slow it to a crawl? Our historic and exquisite mountains deserve to be protected ... and so do the citizens. Really, folks ... how many shopping centers and strip malls do we need? Why can't we be the ones to set a higher standard for development and become a model city/county ... one that has the guts to take a stand and protect what is really valuable to us ... because once it's gone ... **IT'S GONE!** Elaine Lite

As environmental planners, our company works very hard to protect our region's forests, farms, streams, natural and cultural heritage. I believe that infill development within the City of Asheville is vital to securing a high quality regional environment and the ecosystem services that it provides. But I see too much NIMBYism that is getting in the way of infill development. One example is the uproar over the most recently proposed parking deck in downtown Asheville. My office is downtown. We employ 9 persons. We struggled for months to find dedicated parking for our company employees. The situation is still tenuous. Another example is the uproar over the housing development in Kenilworth. If council appeals to populist sentiments over the next four years instead of making wise decisions based on the larger interest of the City, I am fearful that

Asheville will become known as an anti-business environment. And as we all know, good stable businesses are the cornerstone upon which other civic services are built. Without business, you have no jobs. Without jobs, you have no people. Without people, jobs, and business you have no tax base upon which to develop and implement important public services.

Please don't misunderstand me. I do believe that these two projects I provide as examples did have some problems. But that is where good planning and good design comes into play. Please be a councilwoman who looks thoroughly at a project and how good design might overcome popular antagonism BEFORE shooting down such projects.

Thank you for your ear. Andy Brown, President & Environmental Planner

(W.A.N.A.):

We hope to turn back the multi-family zoning of much of West Asheville given the inability of the City Council and associated parties (Planning Department) to work with the citizens. Related to the 1st item, please investigate how citizens comments can be more 'weighted' (in other words, get attended to rather than ignored) re: the blatant disregard for the 7 UDO beginning at the level of the Technical Review committee, stopping off briefly at the Planning and Zoning meeting, and then, simply checked off by the City Council members regardless of how many citizens evidence disapproval of said project. Marsha Hammond

Please mention our concern at next Thursday's City Council Meeting regarding All-Safe Towing Company's business ethics and possibly of its "unfair business ethics" utilized daily. I hate to see Asheville get a bad reputation due to one dishonest business/individual. Randy in Georgia

Here are a few of my ideas about areas that should be emphasized during the next few years:

- 1) Sustainability and environmental issues
 - 2) Fair wages
 - 3) Big box store restrictions
 - 4) Urban planning
 - 5) Disaster preparedness
 - 6) Sign restrictions and other beautification programs
 - 7) Innovative transportation ideas
- Tip Kilby

Upon coming out of the YWCA this am I became aware that I now live in STAPLES NC. I can not believe that sign on their building as viewed from 240 , I truly believe that anyone driving into town would have to think they were in Staples NC. I believe in progress and commercial development but it looks like total disregard for the community to me.

Mike Lamb
47 Stonebridge Drive

I will not be able to attend the meeting on the 12th, but wanted to express my hope that the Council will look at ways to support the local food movement in Asheville. We have a vibrant small scale farm economy all around Asheville, and the city itself has a few thousand residents who vote with their dollars every week to purchase locally grown and processed foods. I recently did a research project on the economic impacts of tailgate markets in the region. My findings indicate that in the four tailgate markets located in the city, over two thousand people shop weekly from May to October, spending approximately \$25,000 weekly in purchases direct from area farmers. In addition, Asheville retailers and distributors including Greenlife Grocery, French Broad Food Co-op, Mountain Foods, and the Grove Arcade Market make a concerted effort to provide local foods to our citizens.

Since 2002, I have supported the development of Blue Ridge Food Ventures, a 12,000 sq foot shared-use food processing center located at the AB Tech Enka Campus (and inside the City Limits). The project opened in February 2005 with a \$1.2 million investment from private foundations and public entities, including Golden Leaf Foundation, Z. Smith Reynolds, Progress Energy, and the NC Rural Center. To date, more than 20 small businesses have used the facility to manufacture a wide range of food products, including fresh-cut local vegetables, baked goods, jams and jellies, trout pate, apple cider, and many more specialty foods. Our target is that by early 2008 the project will support creation of more than 35 jobs with an output of over \$1 million annually.

Right now the project has secured funding for operations until September 2006. Our plan from the beginning has been to support current account operations with external support during the first three years of operations, after which it will be a break-even operation from user fees. Short and simple, the project needs an additional \$180,000 in support to carry it to February 2008. I would be delighted if you and your colleagues could consider ways to help support this project. Attached in .pdf is a flier explaining the project in more detail. Smithson Mills 273-9119

Thanks for the info re. the input meeting on Jan. 12. I have several things I would like to bring up at that meeting such as: 1) Retaining Asheville's identity in spite of all the development, 2) the I-240 plan 3) Transportation in Asheville and Buncombe. Hope to see you there. Va Boyle

I especially hope you will work toward making the city a more beautiful place by adding flowers, etc., and keeping our town cleaner. Asheville has one great asset that is ignored. It is the Municipal Golf Course. I play there and have the opportunity to visit with locals and guests. The green space is wonderful and certainly could use some beautification touches. The course has historical significance and is a great place to enjoy the game for all levels of economic status. I cannot think of a better place to get a good value for your money and get some fresh air and exercise. (It would be good to promote Asheville as being noted for being physically fit and healthy.) It is my wish that you take some time to study municipal golf courses. Greensboro has a great public course.

Thanks for any attention given to the subject. You have a tough job , good luck in all that you do. Kindly, Betty Ann Lackey, Sarasota, Fl. Winter resident

I committed to be somewhere else this night and can't attend. I hope to be at the next one. Keep me posted.

But as to what I see as important to discuss are the following; Strong controls on development - Height restrictions, proper locations, multi use, preserving the beauty and charm of our town, affordable housing. Next would be expanding mass transit. Get all city vehicles on Bio-fuels. STOP the next Sprawl-Mart. I certainly hope Holly will not support it. I will be watching closely ya'll's actions. Clean air and water are on my list too. Preserving and expanding open spaces. How about a new park? Maybe in a disadvantaged neighborhood. More sidewalks and bike paths. Council must adhere to open meetings regulations. And frankly expand them. No backroom deals. Hold businesses accountable to the conditions stated in their permits.

On a side issue, how can I get speed bumps put in on my street. The traffic in front of my house goes WAY TO FAST. Even the bus. Best wishes, Stephen

WHAT DISTURBS ME MOST IS THE FACT SO MUCH DRINKING IS ALLOWED ON THE STREETS IN ASHEVILLE. NEW YEARS EVE IS NO EXCUSE TO ALLOW THIS, NOR IS THE BELE CHERE EVENT. I LIKE A DRINK OR TWO BUT DO NOT APPROVE OF PUBLIC DRUNKENESS WHICH IS RAMPANT IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA. Pat Wells

Quit talking about it and do something with the Civic Center. Ideally strike a deal with the county plus Hendersonville, if possible, to get them to share the burden even if it means moving it from downtown Asheville. How about a corporate sponsor such as the NFL uses then we could have the Sprint, Verizon, Gatorade, V8 or Beverly-Hanks Performing Arts Center or whatever works. Remove all vehicular traffic from downtown Patton Ave., say from the area of the W. parking barn to Pack Place. Look at what Denver, CO; Biloxi, MS; Stockholm, Sweden and so on have accomplished by creating urban pedestrian ways free of autos. Tom Beatty

I will not be able to attend this first meeting, but appreciate the opportunity to offer input. My greatest concerns for the future of Asheville include the need for bike lanes, walking trails and more accessible public transit. I would like to see our city and school busses running on biodiesel, especially since we have blueridgebiofuels right here in Asheville. Granted it all takes work. Please let me know when the work begins, I have education in planning/recreation resource administration and would love to see this get rolling. Linda Welsh

Simply stated ... I'm frustrated ... and I'm worried about the direction the city has taken in the recent past. One of the biggest issues I see is development within the city ... particularly the downtown area.

For example: (1) initial approval of the Grove Park Inn project near Pack Square (thank goodness for loud, protesting voices) (2) **the monolith of a building on Merrimon Ave. across from Greenlife that will be a Staples?** who approved (3) the space on Battery Park Ave. where the old JC Penney building was ... (in my opinion) the structure is way out of place on that small street ... it overwhelms everything else! (4) Potential disaster in planning for the Deal site on Merrimon ... who knows what they have planned for that "valuable" piece of real estate. I've heard condos and MORE shopping! Need I go on?

It's ironic to me that they implement a strict sign ordinance for reasons of aesthetics, but allow construction of buildings that are so out of character with our area to move forward.

As a passionate, long-time resident and business owner, I'm concerned about who is making these decisions and what the motivations are. Why can't the city and city council be more demanding in their standards? Why can't they implement stricter guidelines and be more selective in terms of structural design of new projects ... and just say no when something is so obviously out of synch? I cannot accept a growing business tax base as the only rationale ... not at the expense of the character of our city and the glorious beauty of our mountains and surrounding neighborhoods.

When will politicians and planners wake up and realize that the natural beauty of our mountains is the **key** to our survival ... both environmentally and economically ... not how many strip malls, skyscrapers and housing developments we build. At this rate ... in 5 years, there will be no mountain views or trees left and no reason for tourists to come see the unique beauty of the city we all love. We will be a clone of any other city that has allowed development to go unchecked ... we will have lost our soul.

I would love the opportunity to meet with you and discuss what other options can be implemented for development of city spaces that would conserve the heart and soul of the city - while allowing for moderate growth. I know it's possible ... other areas have succeeded in higher standards ... thoughtful planning is required ... but it can be done.

Thanks for your time ... and good luck in your efforts,

Elaine Lite

Goals for Asheville for 2006-07

Random thoughts from Andy Reed

Improve what's good

- Environment
- Creativity
- Downtown

Fix what's wrong

- Housing costs
- Mega-development
- Inequalities

Asheville has a lot going for it as a livable city: beautiful setting, compact size, thriving creative community, diverse and exciting downtown, and other features. All these are underpinned by its strong sense of place: that Asheville is special, both in reality (so many people choosing to live here) and in reputation (all those magazine ratings).

Council should approach every decision in the context of whether a change will add to that reality or diminish it, including its environment, air, water, cleanliness, etc.

Among the factors that diminish Asheville's livability are housing costs and the tendency of the long-established power structure to run roughshod over rules and regulations they don't like and to keep "outsiders" out of the loop on decision-making (often done behind closed doors). Council should strengthen the affordable housing subsidy fund and every reasonable incentive to build more housing that is not gated, McMansion-style, or condominiums in the half-million dollar price range. Council should also open wide the doors to people who aren't part of the establishment – open them not only during public meetings, as is always done, but to seats on task forces and committees and work sessions. Traditionally Council has paid lip-service to the voices of the people; make Council's willingness to listen a reality by hearing what the people say (just as the public made its voice heard in the election that put you in office).

Here are thoughts on three big issues:

Revising the UDO

- make it a statement of Asheville's identity
- simplify and clarify rules
- use common sense (like allowing drive-throughs along the Merrimon corridor)
- include height restrictions: keep new construction from ruining views from existing buildings, keep the city's skyline in mind
- incorporate aesthetic standards
 - hold those who build steel & glass strictly to guidelines
 - offer incentives for creative design, such as easing of height restrictions, etc.
- envision the future impact of development plans – five, ten, 20, 50 years down the road

Civic Center

MAKE A DECISION! This will require leadership. Get Charles Worley OFF the Civic Center commission – he is the single most obstructive force against making a decision and moving forward. It makes no difference whether the building is renovated, sold, destroyed and replaced, turned into a convention center or business emporium, or if a new civic center is built elsewhere. **DO SOMETHING.** Set an absolute deadline for reports, analyses, and recommendations (I would say June 30, if not before). Then make a choice and move ahead.

Water Authority

Give up this "ownership" bullshit. The water system is a regional asset and a regional burden. Everyone connected to public water lines is invested in it, literally and

figuratively (homeowners pay the cost of connections to their homes, and taxpayers pay for system expansion). During all the years that Asheville has "owned" it, the City has refused to maintain, upgrade, repair or improve the system except during emergencies; instead it has used revenues for expansion and for other, unrelated services. The idea of finding a "buyer" for it that will then run it as a profit center for Asheville, which is how Worley envisions it, is ridiculous. The city is not a business, and even if it were (or were run like one) any business owner knows that you have to have a good product, reasonable pricing, reliable maintenance of inventory and supplies, and competition to thrive. Water lines run under private property, public city and county property, state property, and everywhere else. It must be made independent and accountable. Follow the guidelines suggested in my op-ed last spring (attached document).

I would like to share some concerns I have about the structure of tonight's public input meeting. Granted, no system is perfect, and I hope you decided upon the format after careful consideration of the options.

I'm concerned that by dividing into groups, we're forming committees at the onset. Committees are notorious for dumbing down to the lowest common denominator. Individuals with brilliant ideas and no ability to win popular support shouldn't be shut out of the process.

Most importantly, though, I regret that the subgroups will be generating three issues they think are important. This cuts out the opportunity to dialogue about flawed processes at the root of public policy decisions. Some of our problems persist not for a lack of government attention, but because of the type of government attention they are receiving. Furthermore, if we approach government on an issue-by-issue basis, as opposed to simply upholding principles (liberty and justice for all), we can only hope for more unpopular, Band-Aid-style government.

Following are some sound-bite priorities I speculate may emerge from the subcommittees. After each is some commentary on the direction I think government should take.

- **Affordable Housing**

- * The problem with affordable housing is that it has come to mean subsidized housing. Government is charged with looking after the general welfare of the people, but general welfare does not mean three bedrooms with lots of kitchen space in a neighborhood with the best of schools. Subsidies are demoralizing. Can we put the truly needy up in dormitories where they can stay warm and dry and eat nutritious meals while they look for work? Doing a little more for the truly disabled and frail elderly is not necessarily evil. However, making the working poor subsidize easy living (and thereby freeing up money for habits) for the lazy poor is wrong.

- * Subsidies are great in socialist systems where people are seen as some type of animals only needing their creature comforts met. In a free society that believes people become more creative and more happy when they have opportunities to prove themselves and build character, government should be more focused on creating opportunity (which has a

high correlation to less regulation) than feeding its "pets." High margins for benefit eligibility are incentives for people to act poor.

Charity

* Please be considerate of the working poor who subsidize with their tax dollars the amenities we wish to provide to those who only wish to act poor. We act as if all people on public assistance are dually-diagnosed homeless people incapable of working. People in public housing can afford to smoke and drink and go to bars. They have big-screen TVs, cable, cell phones, nick nacks, stereos. Many working-class people in Asheville cannot afford to buy these things. People on disability walk, talk, write, do drugs, . . . Things have gone too far when tax dollars are taken from the working poor to support the vices of people who prefer a life of comfort handed to them.

* Do our assistance programs enable or empower people? Any public policy, historical, or psychological studies I have bothered to read indicate that handouts are demoralizing. Granted, sometimes a tourniquet is needed, sometimes a Band-Aid will do for the short-term; but a sense of social conscience dictates that it is always helpful to encourage the victim to stop jumping off bridges. Though it is very politically incorrect to say so, the correlation between addiction and poverty is strong. Choices leading to teen pregnancy have a high potential for severely handicapping girls economically for the rest of their lives. What is the reward for being politically correct and condoning self-destructive behaviors?

* In all the books I've read on addiction and recovery, I have never once come across a case study where somebody thanks a government bureaucracy for having the power to change their lives. Even our police chief knows government can keep disorderly people from messing with others, but people only become pro-social citizens through the kind of inspiration that comes from within. People who perform loving acts of kindness can change hearts, but disgruntled bureaucrats doing their job because they have to be there to make money don't inspire many.

Drugs

* Since public safety is government's number-one charge, the fact that we can have a neighborhood like Pisgah View, whose name has become synonymous with danger and illegal activity, is a reflection of warped priorities.

* The APD and their Drug Suppression Unit are good. Yet dealers with records stuffing their file envelopes walk. This is because of North Carolina's structured sentencing laws. But the state laws exist because taxpayers do not want to pay for more prisons and pay for the keep of a tenth of the population while they are locked up in what has become known as a school for learning tricks from other criminals. Dangerous people protect their turf with guns in low-income neighborhoods, and they are, essentially, protected by existing legislation. Stoned addicts are left to stumble down the streets. Where can they turn for help? The system is broken. Support of exploration into minimum-detention rehab facilities is highly recommended.

* Dr. Mumpower's bold initiatives have made a lot of the open-air drug market go underground. This is progress. It sends a message that Asheville does not condone the root cause of 80% of crimes against persons and property. People have moved to Asheville because of our permissiveness on drugs. People from all around come here to buy drugs. What's wrong with our "branding"?

* We demonize and criminalize developers who want to build a store and create jobs. We make them jump through the hoops of the UDO – telling how far apart light bulbs have to be and how big their windows have to be and where they have to put trees. Then we slap more conditions on them in public hearings. But with impunity we let drug-dealers run drive-thrus on residential streets, blocking traffic, causing children to run in and out of traffic, littering the roads with “dealer droppings” – all to conduct illegal and socially destructive activities! Is there any way we can use our UDO to make illegal activity a little tougher in this town? A per-customer tax on residential drive-thrus? A special permit for out-of-car sales? Some kind of portable traffic calming devices for known crack houses? Mandatory underground utility work in front of known crack houses? Truant officers to drive teens loitering during school hours to the principal’s office? We don’t have to be the easiest place to buy drugs in Southern Appalachia.

Jobs

* One lesson from history is that governments do not create wealth. The civilizations that have flourished, Greece, Rome, the US, rose to prosperous circumstances through the creative and productive efforts of free citizens. Better than any financial incentive from government is the inspiration people experience when allowed to follow their own creative bliss and enjoy the fruits of their labors. Taxes cut away at this to grow government at the expense of its subjects. Some government regulation can be justified in terms of a safe environment, but a lot of it can be cut to make the area more attractive to businesses who want to build and operate in Asheville.

* Here’s a definition of economic incentives: An indication that taxes are too high and regulations too stiff.

Neighborhoods vs Development

* It is wrong to extort developers wanting to build in the city to make them pay for things the city wants. Developers’ money is not the property of the state. Furthermore, this practice escalates the cost of building, making housing less affordable and driving away people who might create jobs.

* Neighbors do not have the right to do with other peoples’ properties as they please. It is un-American for neighbors to request legislation (conditional use permits) restricting hours of operation on one business, limiting the number of people who can assemble at a building at one time, or even saying which trees somebody can or cannot cut down on their own property. It is OK to politely ask neighbors to be friendly, but not to create what amounts to personal, liberty-depriving legislation.

Perks

* We will probably hear that a nice community center will keep kids off drugs. Granted, we don’t want kids’ feet falling through rotted floorboards on the basketball court – but \$3 million in improvements for Reid Center seems a little much.

* Robin Cape recently did well to explain that it is not the role of government to provide services (a recording studio) to undercut those who are trying to make a living off providing them in the free market.

* How dare people in a free country petition government to impose on fellow taxpayers to suit their selfish wishes. It is OK for government to say, “Go do it yourself.”

Plans

* Big, centralized, pseudolegislativ government plans would be ominous, indeed – except that they always come out so Mickey-Mouse, and run a high chance of never getting implemented.

* The City's strategic operating plan is a joke. First of all, "strategic" is a misnomer. Secondly, in spite of its goals, items are still placed on the agenda one-by-one, and, as Jan Davis pointed out, justified through stretches of the SOP. (e.g., Expensive rain-and-stream gauges will help with water quality.)

* Our eyes are bigger than our tummies. We keep seeing expensive plans for the Civic Center or gateway corridors. With the financial uncertainties surrounding the water agreement litigation, we don't need to have the most dazzling downtown. The last time I checked, it was not the role of government to provide dazzling downtowns, only to protect the people from each other. Let's worry about basic safety first.

* When elected officials praise some of these plans, it is often an indication that they did not read them. The sidewalk plan had such interesting statements as (paraphrasing for lack of memory), "People have been walking throughout history." We know lots of glossy pages of volumized fluff, with photos of children of different races playing together impress people who award government grants – but they wouldn't impress taxpayers. As Dr. Mumpower said, we can spend up the whole sidewalk budget paving cow trails where we know people are walking. We don't need another study to sit on the shelf. Taking needed action that may not be the most strategically tactical is a whole lot better than foot-dragging and doing nothing but planning.

Process

* Let's accept that democracy is manipulable. Just because Council members get flooded by email requests to support one side of an issue, does not mean that issue is correct. It does not mean the opinion leader encouraging everybody to write their leaders has his facts straight.

* I am astonished that anybody would get elected after running on a platform of democracy, even accepting funds that were in many respects not local from a pro-democracy group – and as soon as they are in office request that each Council person get to address only one issue per agenda item. Now, we're having a public forum where input is being watered-down by subcommittees in the initial stages.

* Sometimes at public hearings, I feel like developers are groveling at the feet of government asking for their (supposedly Constitutionally-guaranteed) property rights back. This master-knave mentality has got to go.

Public Transpo

* One of the greatest problems with public transportation is good intentions. People want it, but when they get it, it just isn't convenient anymore. Brownie Newman recently stated that studies have shown that with public transportation demand rises to meet the supply. This is not consistent with traditional economics, and it would appear that the market is already glutted by the number of buses that ride around empty today.

* If we really want clean air, we need to think about options that might be less fuelish than running empty buses.

Role of Government

* Conservatives might say the role of government is to preserve law and order by protecting individual rights. Progressives might say it is the role of government to look after the welfare of people. With our ability to read the historical record and evaluate

public policy in this country and others, it is not difficult to substantiate the claims that (1) Government entitlements are demoralizing. They enable, but do not empower. (2) There is a high correlation between prosperity and an individual's opportunities to follow his bliss and enjoy the fruits of his labors. Governments cannot create wealth. They ought to create opportunity - often this means staying out of the way.

- * Government should not pass laws it cannot enforce. By setting goals of "education and awareness," and naming as criteria abstract notions like "community feel," government opens the door for itself to extend beyond reasonable limits.

- * Are we giving non-elected bodies like CAN, CREIA, and CIBO more power than they ought to have by consulting them on issues before Council?

- * Has Brownie Newman's recommendation to form a "Closing Committee" to get rid of superfluous government appendages been pursued?

- * Governments should only be in the business of protecting their citizens from each other and outside threats. They also have been known to be a good option for providing basic services that lend themselves toward natural monopolies (like building roads). We let public safety go in low-income neighborhoods, get government involved in all sorts of cultural awareness programs, and leave it up to the former vice mayor to fund anti-drug incentives and public transportation initiatives (basic city services) out of his own pocket. What's wrong with this picture?

- * According to Lt. Fisher, next to public housing, bars are hot spots for police calls. What can be done about this?

Smart Growth

- * Smart Growth is good for other people. Very few opt to live on top of each other in concrete jungles. What did we just see with the parking garage? How can we advocate more greenspace/public space and Smart Growth? The same people who want Smart Growth don't want high-rises downtown. How about cutting some slack for developers, landscape architects, and builders - the kind who knew Staples would be imposing.

Taxes

- * Members of Council often talk as if Federal dollars or state dollars are freebies. It should go without saying that Asheville taxpayers contribute to the pot as well. It is unfair to our neighbors in Raleigh, Wilson, or even Los Angeles, to expect them to contribute to our community's civic center or other niceties. State and Federal taxes, due to the relative sizes of the bureaucracies, are returned to the payees more diluted than local dollars. We should impose on our neighbors only in times of urgent need.

- * Furthermore, acceptance of federal or state assistance moves us closer to that master-knave relationship with power centralized in a remote location. This is not a habit to "experiment with."

- * Local government is involved in so much that doesn't come close to basic city services (Bele Chere, controversial art, irrelevant studies, downtown beautification, processing and enforcing reportedly Draconian building codes), program cuts would be preferable to increasing taxes.

Traffic.

- * Why do we bother to do traffic studies when we can bend them to arrive at the conclusion that the maelstrom in front of the Asheville Mall is fine. If this meets traffic requirements, what doesn't?

* Why do we pave our roads to make them smooth and navigable, and then plop traffic calming down to make them less smooth and navigable? Why do we have billboard ordinances, but erect all kinds of yellow-and-black signs around our traffic calming devices? The weeds and paint are ugly, and I don't know that the risks of running over something in the dark or fog offsets the benefits. How many motor vehicle casualties or permanent injuries do we have in Asheville?

UDO

* Building codes can help with safety and make cities more livable, but the UDO has gone too far. Every ordinance is a law. Who can be held accountable for a book that some people say is hard enough to lift, let alone read.

* Why do we have such tight regulations on trees? With all the compliance, our City is not beautifully landscaped. The prettiest street is probably Lexington Avenue, where John Lantzus planted crepe myrtles and hung planters. The landscaping at what used to be Clyde Savings downtown is also beautiful. Trees planted in rows like soldiers just don't bring in the tourists.

Freedom

* Asheville has a reputation for being a place where people have the freedom to be licentious. We are asked to embrace drug culture, unmarried couples, pandhandling, homelessness, and other behaviors that come with high health risks and economic impact.

* Then we rough people up who want to create, produce, and provide opportunities for others with our ordinances and public input process. Why is change OK when it represents culture-on-the-skids, but not when it will support new business or build new homes?